

Spring 4-2-2013

Interview transcripts of 2012 SUSTAIN Cohort in 2013: ID 1206

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Recommended Citation

Spring April 2, 2013.

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Sustain Interview Project

██████████ (E) interviewed by ██████████ (G)

Interviewed on 5/9/13

G: and then if I have something to say, I'll try to say it after. I'm here with ██████████! So I just record it so, you know, we have it in posterior perpetuity and then those will be transcribed for us later. So, I'm here with ██████████, and I'm asking the question: 'what happened to you in Sustain?'; 'What has happened to you since?'; 'What reflections do you have to offer?' Start talking—say anything: go.

E: Oh gosh, okay, so I started—

G: --I'm gonna put that by you since you have a nice, soft voice.

E: Okay—

G: And I'm drinking a lot of coffee, which means I'll talk nice and loud.

E: I—okay, I started, I remember the application process when I went on the computer and then I answered those bunch of questions that um that asked about the educational aspect and how, you know, the different kind of learning thing, and I was really into that because, um, in high school, I actually wrote a paper that was talking about, um, how um just the whole grading system and the testing, the testing thing, how schools are so focused on those numbers, so I was happy to—that Sustain, their goal was to create a different kind of um, a different kind of learning. And so, coming into the program, I guess I thought that's what it was gonna be—and then—it was funny because I didn't even think about the green aspect of it, and all the projects how we'd be into the environment but um so that actually brought a whole new understanding, um, a whole new thing to think about for me? Cause I wouldn't have been into the whole green movement as much, but um, yeah, I think that kinda fell off the goal of, you know, making the program more—I don't know—first of all, I didn't even know if was gonna be the first year that that was happening.

G: [laughing] Ha ha ha...that was evil laughter to the transcriber...

E: Well, so, it was you know a few weeks in and I was started to question 'wait a second—have they done this before?' um but so yeah just getting it all going I think I actually fell back a little because I don't know I wanted to go into something that had already been established and I was kinda I guess scared to start something?

G: Why?

E: Um, I didn't know what to do? And you know just the—going through school my whole life I've been you know on this track of the teacher tells you what to do and me creating my own learning environment and with the other students not all into it too I just feel like I fell off.

G: Tell me more what you mean by 'fell off'

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E: Um, I don't think I achieved my goal of trying to 'get there'—trying to have my own classroom education, on my own, because I remember, you know, in the first few weeks of it, in the history class, the comparative social movements class—we were supposed to research a bunch of things on our own, look through the whole articles, and that took hours upon hours and then in class we would discuss it, and it just began to be too much work and the other students were like, 'no—we're not gonna read these articles anymore.' And so it just came more of an efficiency thing where we you know did as little work as possible to get as many grades as possible, so I think this program was actually taken advantage of a little bit because of the lack of, um, effort that was needed. But I know that there were some students who put so much of themselves into it, and I admired them so much for that, and I think that's what this program was really about—was taking the drive of the students who could and were motivated and to provide a platform for them to have their education self.

G: But you don't include yourself in that it sounds like.

E: I--I don't know where I fell in that. . . Maybe I, you know if I was part of that 'group' I would latch on and then I would become like them.

G: What do you mean 'that group'?

E: Oh—I feel like it's ██████████ and like ██████████ and ██████████ and... I feel, just the ones who really stretched out and had a big voice

G: Huh. How was it for you socially?

E: Um...it was good. Um, I didn't make any friends that I hang out with outside of school, but I, I definitely see people and say 'hi'—I saw ██████████ yesterday at a poetry slam and she's always friendly--

G:--I love her.

E: --Yeah....But it did feel a little click-ish.

G: Hmmm.

E: Um, I think that was part of the different United Way groups and then the Sustain SLO, so all those created a...different group.

G: What do you mean the 'United Way groups'?

E: Oh—just the whole project groups.

G: Oh oh oh oh yeah. Was United Way yours?

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E: Yeah, United Way was mine, so I ended up hanging out with ██████████ a lot

G: Which one?

E: Uhhh

G: ██████████? ██████████?

E: ██████████. Oh yeah—██████████!

G: Yeah.

E: Lot of Trinitians... Trinity people. So...hang out with them. Got to know them better.

G: Cool.

E: Um...yeah.

G: How was it transitioning back into the regular learning model?

E: It didn't feel difficult at all.

G: Not difficult.

E: Yeah.

G: Yeah

E: Um. I don't know it was kinda funny because now after only, I guess, two, three quarters later, Sustain feels like something that was totally in the past, um, and totally like a hidden, like secret thing now—like 'oh yeah—I did that'—and when people ask about.. you know, what I've done in college yet, I've been like, 'I don't know—it's been nothing'—but then I think about Sustain thing, which was so different from anyone's experience and then--

G: --Yeah

E: I don't know. I think, it's, I don't know—it's gone now.

G: Yeah

E: Gotta remind myself...

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G: I think I'm curious about what you said—um, or I'd love to hear you say more, just about your thoughts about what you recognized—I heard you say that some people took advantage—

E: Mmmhmmm.

G: Say some more about that, like what you think about that or what your reflections are about it.

E: Ummmm

G: You said you wrote a paper about assessment.

E: Yeah—oh yeah. The, okay, because people are trying, or students try to uh get the highest score and when it's when you can't measure when we're in a program where we can't measure how much you've learned so easily as a score then you tend to not put as much energy into getting that score or getting that—

G: Yeah

E:--Learning. Um...

G: Yeah. That's cool. Any other thoughts? Just about your experience in Sustain or—these are all perfectly clear. My questions really are just about you, so a couple of people have said 'do you need me to say something nice about the program?' so this isn't an endorsement campaign in any way. It's a National Science Foundation funded research about your individual experience, so it's 'what was it like?' I'm hearing a lot—you're telling me a lot, so I'm only asking the same question to make sure that I've heard everything you have to say. Some people—we'll have to strike all this—some people, particularly introverts that I talk to um have wanted to choose to come back later to me and say, 'I thought of this thing later' so if you're a person that takes longer to chew, so you can do that.

E: Yeah

G: So you can at some point say 'stop asking me the same question'—somebody this morning said, 'you keep asking me the same question'—I'm like well—waiting to make sure you've said, so go ahead—is there anything else?

[took a break and came back]

E: So that's what I've been trying to do more, is ask questions and not feel stupid because that is one of the major things I think about just regular classes was asking questions I'd feel dumb and like, you know we'd talked about it already—and that's also in Linda's Physics class, I felt what she pushed for was keep asking and I won't, you know, I won't

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hate you for not having understood what we just talked about. And so that comfortableness was something that I think helped me learn more, yeah, and feel like it was okay to to just kind of discuss and even go off topic in a class um I learned so much more just talking about something than something I wouldn't want to talk about

G: Yeah. How are your classes going now? I put you back on just so you know...

E: umm..my classes now—I'm in an LGBT and Media class.

G: Are ya—how's that?

E: Um it's I don't know we're reading a lot of books and then we go in and discuss it and it's kind of a depressing class, and I think it's because the...I don't know what the teacher has to say is pretty interesting, but I think it's actually the way he says it and then the other energy of the people it's just it doesn't, it doesn't come together in an exciting way, so, class day to day is kinda sad.

G: What's your role there?

E: My role?

G: Yeah.

E: Oh—I, I just fit in. I don't think I make waves. I try to make good points. Sometimes something will come to me—

G: Yeah

E: --And so I get excited about that point and then you know a discussion will happen but--

G: Does anybody in the class ever express any kind of dissatisfaction with the feel of the group?

E: No.

G: I wonder what would happen.

E: Yeah. You mean in front of the teacher? Because...

G: Just in the community, in that, in that learning community. I'm making a face like I don't know what that, I don't know what it's like, but what, I wonder what would happen. . .

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E: Yeah...I don't think anything would change. I think it would be the same—or maybe we would actually come together a little bit more knowing that this is a very sad class that—yeah, we would try to make it funner, we'd be on the same level,

G: Cool

E: Core's going pretty well. That's a challenging class, um. Oh—and music of the sixties. I'm in that. Oh—but that's another problem is, we don't have lab? Or discussion? There's an outside class that we're not in, so that's, that's kind of disappointing and that happened with Botany too, I didn't have a lab in that class, and I missed the lab. The other students were like in their microscopes and were drawing like cells. I didn't know what they were doing, actually, but um I kinda wished we had that. Instead we were kinda talking about life's goals. We ended up talking about the learning thing, the curiosity. So I'm sure we got that that those other students in the lab didn't get. But Music of the Sixties I wish we had some kind of music listening session. I don't know what it would be. But I think there's a couple hours that we miss.

G: Huh.

E: Spanish. Ooh—that's a fun one. Teacher's straight up from Barcelona. She's a old and sun, sun-weathered and I think I might want to do Madrid for my study abroad.

G: Is that something that you could—have you always wanted to travel?

E: No—but my parents have always pushed me to travel—

G: --Funny

E: --so I figure there must be something in it. And I'm totally open to adventure, um, so I think it's something that I'd fit with.

G: That's cool. That'll be a great experience.

E: Oh yeah—and being independent. That's another thing it was just going to a new country on my own because my parents have taken me places. And I don't think I've experienced them as much as I could've.

G: Yeah—very different.

E: Yeah.

G: I flew once to um I flew once to Germany and back in a weekend because in my early twenties it was the first time I'd ever really travelled alone. And I got there and I just was scared to death. And I was travelling for work. I was taking senior citizens on a—this is what I did out of college—again, all strikeable, ██████████, totally strikeable

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interview because I've talked so much—why am I telling you this story? Except to say that it does take a lot of guts when you travel. The first time I did it it scared me to death. You'll do great.

E: Mhmmmm.

G: I took, I was delivering senior citizens—this was much first job out of college. I worked for a senior citizen—

E: Delivering people?

G: They were not dead. I was a, I planned group travel for senior citizens. It was my first job out of college, so I was sent to Europe as a tour director to basically help these people get—they were able-bodied people, but to guide them—through three flights, you know 24 hours of travel to get from one—it was about 24 hours door-to-door.

E: Yeah

G: And then, so I basically had a free ticket there and back.

E: Wow—that's awesome

G: But when I got there I didn't speak the language, didn't know anybody, hadn't done it before, and I was like GET ME HOME. And I took the bus back to the Munich airport—I was supposed to fly out of Paris, I took it back to the airport. I was like I WANNA GO HOME NOW. And I just flew back, so I left Thursday morning and I was home Saturday night

[laughing]

E: Oh that's awful

G: Really dehydrated from all the plane food, which they used to serve at the time.

E: Mmmmm.

G: So---Madrid, that'll be great for you...is there anything else—Sustain?

E: Not off the top of my head.

G: If you think of other stuff...